Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

BEING THE

BACCALAUREATE SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY,

JUNE 27, 1869.

By JAMES McCOSH, D.D., LL.D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.

PRINCETON, N. J.:
STELLE & SMITH, PUBLISHERS AND BOOKSELLERS.
1869.

To Andrew Lamar McCosh
from his Father

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PRINCETON, JULY 1, 1869.

REV. DR. MCCOSH,

Dear Sir:

In accordance with a resolution of the Class of '69, passed unanimously at a meeting held on Commencement day, Wednesday, June 30, 1869, we would earnestly and respectfully request a copy of the Baccalaureate Sermon delivered by you in the First Presbyterian Church, Princeton, on Sunday, June 27th, for publication.

On behalf of graduating class,

N. EWING, JR.,
F. BALTZELL,
H. BERGNER,
Committee.

PRINCETON, AUG., 1869.

Gentlemen:

I comply with your request, not because I look on the discourse as possessing any special excellence in itself, but because it winds up a course of instruction delivered during the year, and in the hope that it may be blessed to those who heard it in circumstances fitted to awaken thought and feeling.

JAMES MCCOSH.

SERMON.

John XIV. 6. JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

Every one must have felt that there is a peculiar tenderness of sentiment, and at the same time, elevation of view in those discourses which our Lord addressed to his disciples ere he parted from them. It has often been remarked, that the love of friends never seems so great as when they are about to be separated: and it certainly looks as if the prospect of parting with his disciples, who had companied with him for years, had imparted a special pathos to these heart utterances of our Lord. That sun looks large and glows upon us with a greater splendor ere he sets. In particular how large does He appear as he presents himself under these aspects, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Let us look to Him first under these aspects separately, and secondly, as combining them.

I. LET US VIEW CHRIST IN THESE THREE ASPECTS SEPARATELY.

(1). *I am the Way.* One of the deepest feelings in man's nature is a sense of want, a want of something, of something which his own nature, which this world are found incapable of supplying. You, self-righteous man, are made to feel on occasions, that it may not be altogether safe to stand on your past conduct or present character. Ah world-

ling! you are sensible that there is something unsatisfying in these very comforts and enjoyments of yours: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, nor the ambition with success, nor the lust with gratification, ay there is something wanting, and you know it, you feel it at times, though you may not yet know, or be ready to acknowledge, what it is that would fill the void.

It arises from sin—no doubt of that—from the terrible disruptions with the intervening chasms which sin has produced. But it can scarcely be called a sense of sin, except indeed at tempestuous times when the conscience arouses us, as the heathen mariners did Jonah, "Arise thou sleeper and call upon thy God." And this awakening is apt to be only temporary, and we demand a little more sleep, a little more slumber; but it is not the sleep which God gives his beloved, but a broken sleep with troubled dreams, and wakings up, with sudden starts ever and anon, which make us long for unbroken rest without finding it.

What man especially needs to know is a *way*—a way of access to the Father. "Show us the Father," said Philip. For it is natural to man to have some apprehension of God. Man, alas, is naturally sinful, naturally ungodly, but he is not naturally an atheist. I enter not here upon the disputed speculative question, as to whether the idea of God is or is not innate: what I maintain is that despite his downward tendencies, man is led, by what he sees without him, by what he feels within to look up to a supernatural power. The conscience within telling us of a law and pointing to a lawgiver; the marks of order, beauty, and design in earth and sky, in plant and animal; the traces of care and government; the encouragements to good and the penalties attached to evil in the providence of God; all these lead and constrain us to entertain some idea, some hope, or fear, or faith, in regard to an agency above the elements and other natural agents. That Being he would fondly claim as a Father. But where is that Father? How can he know the way?

Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us. The belief may be vague, the longing indefinite: "an infant crying in the night," when its mother is gone, because it wants it knows not what; the want is positive, the object it cries for is unknown, but there is a terrible cry for it when at any time it awakes.

The feeling is for something wanting, something which has been lost. Man feels as if he had wandered, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." There must be a way, no doubt of it, to the Father, but how can we know the way? There is a way but by some mistake or misfortune we have lost it, and the difficulty is to discover it; and when at any time we find a promising track on this world's surface, and set out on it we are soon made to feel that it is not the right one, as it conducts us to no satisfactory termination. "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them." Conceive a revolving planet or a shining sun wandering from its sphere up there where "order is heaven's first law." Now it is hindered and stayed by bodies attracting it or attracted by it, and forthwith it dashes through space threatening to strike and break in fragments, or kindle into a conflagration all the other planets and suns it meets with. It is a picture of a wandering angel, it is a picture of a wandering man, loosened from the central power that stays him, and away from the central light that should illuminate him; now restrained sluggish and slothful, and anon dancing along in perilous or destructive paths; now in darkness, and again in light that blinds or among fires that consume. That wandering body up in the heavens, will not right itself till brought back to its old position, and made to move in its old path. That wandering sinner on earth will not be in his right state and position, till brought back to his old relation to God, and moving round him as a centre illuminated by his beams.

But how can we know the way? Human reason can give no intelligent or satisfactory answer to this question. All its investigations only conduct into ever thickening darkness, in which fears and doubts have their appropriate dwelling place. Who is worthy to open this sealed book and unfold this mystery? When this question is put all creation continues silent and abashed. The depth saith it is not in me, and the sea saith it is not in me. The thoughtful mind would weep like John, till such time as it sees the lion of the tribe of Judah taking the book and breaking the seals. The mind feels that it has nothing to rest on, no truth on which the understanding can settle, and the heart repose till it sees Christ standing, and hears him proclaiming "I am the way."

(2). "*I am the Truth.*" By truth in this passage we are not to understand abstract general doctrine, such as we have in our creeds and excellent catechisms. Such systematized truth being a comprehensive summary of the scattered statements of God's Word, may serve some good purposes in exhibiting the unity of the truth, in guiding the thoughts of the young and of inquirers generally, and in testing soundness in the faith. But it is not to such that our Lord refers, when he says "I am the truth." Truth is defined by philosophers as the agreement of our ideas with things. When in regard to any particular object or event, our views correspond to realities in that matter we have truth. When we know God as he really is, and the relation in which we stand to him, then have we truth in religion. But how can we know God as he really is? When apart from Christ we set out in the search, how difficult to find Him! Do we not feel as if he were at an awful distance and beyond our reach, as if he were at an infinite height above us, and as if we could no more rise to him with our spirits, than our frail bodies could mount from earth to heaven? Who will give us wings that we may ascend to Him? Alas! the attraction of earth is too powerful to allow of our ascending

to Him. Who then will go up to heaven to bring him down to us? As we make these searches and efforts the conscience of sin unrepented and unforgiven makes us feel that they are all in vain. The approach must be on his part. The grandest thinker of all heathen antiquity (Plato), was obliged to say "the Father of the world is hard to discover, and when discovered cannot be communicated." "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us," said a humbler man. Blessed be his eternal love and grace, the Father hath shown himself to us. Jesus said to him who put the question, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not seen me, Philip; he that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then shew us the Father." When we go in by Christ the way he introduces to the Father, and we have the truth. Here is the bridge that spans the chasm. Here is the link that joins the sundered parts.

"What is truth," was the question put by Pilate to our Lord. It is usually said that he did not give a reply. He may not have answered him in words, but he answered him in fact. He had said "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I unto the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." The truth was before him, if he had but known the gift of God, and who it was that was speaking to him. For when we know Christ we know God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and henceforth we have no need to say "shew us the Father."

Pained with the contemplation, man has ever been afraid to look upon an infinitely holy God. Man has ever been carnalizing God in order to bring him down to his own level, and in carnalizing has been degrading him. But here in the Eternal Word become flesh, is a God incarnate without being degraded. The brightness of the Father's glory without being shorn of a single ray, shines upon us with a milder lustre as it comes from the face of his Son. All coldness and distrust are banished, when we feel that in drawing near to Jesus it is man coming to man. Un-

belief is dispelled when we realize that we have a brother's heart beating for us on the throne of glory. This is the truth, and the soul that has found Christ, has found the truth, and feels that it has found the truth, and need go no farther. With the truth there is assurance, and assurance yields peace. People often wonder how faith should be the source of peace. And certainly faith will not give peace, unless it be a faith in truth, a faith in the reality of things. The faith of the heathen in their gods does not give peace. It is faith in Christ as the truth, as known to be the truth, as felt to be the truth, which gives peace. The eye brought out of darkness unto marvellous light, does not need to be told that this is the light, it knows that is the light, and the light is pleasant to the eyes as in every way suited to it. The ear does not need to be informed that this is music, it feels it to be so as it listens to it and rejoices in it. This, this is the reality of things. "I have found," "I have found," is the expression of the soul, as if it feels that it has got what it was seeking and is satisfied.

(3). "*I am the Life.*" It is of vast moment that we know the way; essential that we reach the truth; but we must have more. The well formed statue is an interesting object, but none of us would exchange our living condition, for that of the chiselled marble which stands so stiff and cold on its pedestal. God's work was not half finished, when he fashioned that goodly frame of ours out of the dust of the ground; it was not completed till he breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul. Along with the truth we must have life.

A living poet describes one of his characters as dead and buried under the streets of a great city, and yet—inconsistent enough I grant—hearing above him the clattering sounds of the moving men and horses and chariots, so that he can not have the rest, which the dead are expected to enjoy. It is a picture of not a few sinners, perhaps of all sinners, in heathen and in Christian lands at certain times. They

would have, and yet they cannot have, the insensibility of the dead. And so since they cannot have absolute unconsciousness, they would have life. Yes, there are few or none so dead that they do not wish at times to have life. And yet when they would excite and stimulate it, they find that they have only the clamminess of death. It is evident that the heathens are seeking a life. You see it in their meaningless prayers uttered so vehemently; in their sacrifices often so painful; in their processions, in their shouts, in their dances, in their revelries, in their licentiousness without shame. But after they have done it all, they do not feel that they have life to warm and sustain the soul. Instead of living affection, they find in their inner heart only a blank and a felt void. They would at times struggle, like a strong swimmer thrown on the wide waves, only to find themselves hopelessly sinking. All their convulsive efforts are merely like those of the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel, when they beat their bodies, and cut their breasts, only to find their sacrifice lying cold upon the altar.

Feeling will never be excited in the bosom by a mere command, by a mere determination to raise it. There must be something to call it forth, there must be an object to call it forth; there must be an object presented, believed in, to call it forth. There must be a living, a lovely, and a loving object to call it forth. This is a great defect of our systems of natural religion; while they contain a body of important truths, they present nothing to raise affection. This is the defect of the moral system of Confucius, so extensively adopted in China; addressing moral beings it has no provided pardon for immorality, and no object to evoke sentiment. The Brahmins profess to find life in abstraction, in meditation, in union with Brahma. But it is all in vain. Their theology in its highest meaning is vague, objectless, inane—like the thin air up high in the atmosphere, in which when we mount up into it, there is nothing to sustain us, and unsupported and in chill we feel that we must

speedily come down, if we would avoid a collapse and a fall. If love is ever called forth in these bosoms of ours, it must be by a person, an individual person, and not an abstraction, by a living person, lovely and loving. There is such an object presented to us to call forth feeling in Christ. Apprehended as the truth he becomes the life; his spirit is given to us and is dwelling in us, and he becomes the life in the soul, the life of the soul.

II. Let us view Christ as combining these aspects.

The full truth is to be found in the union of these separate truths, each having its proper place.

When each has its due place, Christ must have the supreme place as the head, all other things being the members. He must be in the building not only as a stone, he must be the corner stone, in order to have a sure foundation. He must not only be in the arch, he must be the keystone, to keep all the parts fitly joined together, and thus bear up the weight, the weight of our sins and the weight of our sorrows, which has to be laid upon it.

There are some who would have us, first to find the way, and then as we walk in that way to find Christ. But Jesus is himself the way. "I am the way," "verily I say unto you I am the door of the sheep." Some put the Church before Christ, and would have inquirers first to find the church, and then through it to find Christ. But this is to reverse the proper and the scriptural order. Let us first seek Christ, and when we have found him we are in the true church invisible, and in this pure light we shall be better able to discover the proper church visible. That is the true church which makes Christ the head, "from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

There are some who would have us first to seek the truth, and then seek Christ. And by all means let those who have not yet found Christ, be exhorted to seek the truth.

Yes, seekers of truth deserve all the honor that has been paid to them. Sincere and prayerful seekers of truth, will sooner or later find what they are looking for; not it may be in the place which they expected, or in the lordly form which their imaginations painted; but they will find it, in lowly guise it may be, but yet the very truth of God, which they have been seeking. But seekers of truth will never find truth or religion till they find Christ. Let us not go out with the tapers of earth to seek the sun, the sun is shining in the heavens and is seen in his own light. Any other light can at best be merely like the stars raised in the heavens to guide the wise men of the east, serving a good end only so far as it guides us to where Christ is to be found.

Some would find life without Christ There is a general feeling in the present day in all the churches, Protestant and Catholic, and among some aroused heathen nations, that they must by all means have life, have religious life. But there are some seeking for it apart from Christ. Their appeal is to inward feeling, and intuition. But what I ask is to call forth other sentiments from the cold and sinful hearts. There must be an object to call them forth, there must be a living being to draw them towards himself. That living being is the Son of God, who is also the Son of Man, presenting himself to us in all his grace and attractiveness. But they tell us with an imposing air, that this affection may be drawn forth by such grand and glorious ideas, as those of the infinite and the eternal. Now I admit that man is capable of forming such ideas, and I am opposed to that philosophy which would make them mere negations. But these ideas call forth love, only when the qualities they look at are regarded as attributes of a living being, whose love is infinite, whose love is eternal.

Again, there are persons who would take Christ under one of these aspects or in one of these characters, but who do not care for the others. Thus there are some who would cheerfully accept Christ as the way, but who stop at the

entrance, instead of going on the path which has been opened. This is a temptation to which numbers are exposed in seasons of revival. They are most anxious to have Christ for salvation, but having found forgiveness, as they think, and peace and assurance, they do not go on to establish themselves in the truth. Some of these are apt to become teachers, when they should still be scholars. How wise the warning of the Apostle, who in describing the qualifications of ministers of the Word, says they should not be "novices," that is newly born, lest being puffed up with pride they fall into the condemnation of the devil. What they who are born from above need, is training and a settling in the truth, that being taught themselves they may be able to teach others.

There are some contented with the truth without the life. They are satisfied with their orthodox creed, with their reverence for the Bible, and their attendance at the house of God and meetings for prayer, and care nothing for a consistent course of honor, honesty, humility, temperance and kindness and the Christian graces. Ah this it is that furnishes a pretext to the enemies of evangelical religion, when they declare that your religious professors are no better than others, and that if Christ were to come among us suddenly and unexpectedly, he would address ministers and people, "Scribes and pharisees, hypocrites." Such a formal religion is offensive above all things to man, even as it is displeasing to God. "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted. It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of man."

Once more, there is a very different class, who seek the life without the truth. Some may have been led into this by a reaction against a stiff formalism, or frigid orthodoxy. In other cases I fear it proceeds from an unwillingness to submit to any wholesome restraints. We have an attempt to realize such an idea all over the three kingdoms in the

present day. Persons are calling for a life, which is to be independent of all the old forms of orthodoxy, and of the letter of the Word of God. And I for one do not feel that I am called on to fight for the additions, which men have made to divine truth or to the forms which they have imposed upon it. There is a curse pronounced at the close of the Book of Revelation, upon those who would add to it. "For I testify to every man that heareth the word of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." But there is also a curse ready to alight on those who would diminish ought from that word. "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Of this I am sure that the life which is not supported by scriptural truth, will be of a very powerless, wavering, and transient character; and we have not a few examples in the present day, of persons beginning to slide on the scale, only to find themselves speedily falling at its base. By all means let us have the fire and the flame too; but no fire can be kept up without a solid material to feed on, and the nutriment on which the spiritual life feeds on is the truth of God's word.

We may now consider these truths especially in their practical connection. And here as in regard to doctrinal belief let us not put asunder, what the Lord hath indissolubly joined together. The garment which falls to our lot is woven throughout and without seam, and cannot be divided. That garment is Christ's, and becomes ours through his sufferings and death.

Jesus was so called from his birth, because he saves his people from their sins. The work is his throughout. Let us consider how much is involved in this salvation. Let us look to him for pardon, by all means pardon, for it is to be found nowhere else. But this is not all that is involved

in salvation, he is Jesus so called not only because he saves from the consequences of sin, but because he saves from the sins themselves.

If I am to have the love of the world and of the things that are in the world brought down, it must be by having my heart fixed on a new object which I love more dearly, it must be by Christ becoming the supreme object of affection. No man was ever yet saved from his sins by merely striving with them. Alas! many brave men have been defeated in the fight, and have been merely exasperated by the struggle, as the prisoner is chafed in beating upon the walls of his prison from which there is no escape, as the eagle is irritated by its dashing upon its cage, as the sea is lashed into foam by its being driven upon the rocks. "Sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." "When the commandment came sin revived and I died." "Sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me and by it slew me." It is when I am led to love Christ that I am delivered from that selfishness, which is so deeply seated in the soul, and which so cleaves to me. It was when the ark of the covenant was put into the temple of Dagon, that the idol fell down, and it was as it continued there, that all attempts to raise him up failed, and he became more crushed and broken. And it is thus that these idols of ours are cast down before the presence and power of Jesus as he condescends to enter our hearts. This is the pearl of great price, which when a man hears of he sells all that he has, all wordly lusts and passions, that he may have it, and feel that he is rich when he has such a possession. Swayed by this new and higher and more potent affection, he is ready to part with the lusts which have been dearest to him, when he discovers them to be offensive to him whom his soul loveth. If his right hand offends he cuts it off and casts it from him, if his right eye offends he plucks it out and casts it from him. And when at any time the believer is led into sin, and is tempted to go

on headstrong in his course, he is brought to repentance as Peter was, by a view of Jesus as he turns round and looks upon him; it is that look of Jesus that makes him "go out and weep bitterly."

It is as we look up to that star in the sky, that this downward look of ours is uplifted, and our frame becomes erect and our path becomes a forward one. It is this light shining above us, as the sun which shows us the path and cheers us as we walk in it. It is by looking into the face of Jesus that we are changed into the same image, as we have seen the image of heaven reflected on the bosom of a tranquil lake spread out beneath. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image as by the spirit of the Lord."

It is part of my duty as President to give Biblical Instruction to the students of this College. In fulfilment of this I have during the year, taken as my theme the Life of Jesus as detailed in the four Gospels. Next year I may direct the students to the planting of the Church as recorded in the book of Acts, and in portions of the Epistles. In a third year I may go back to the preparations for the coming of Christ, in the Old Testament. And in a fourth year I may expound Christian Doctrine. This plan, if I am spared to execute it, enables us to go round a full course of Bible instruction in four years. I have begun at the foundation: "For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid which is Jesus Christ." It is a most interesting fact and significant that religious thought and discussion for some years past in Europe, and now in America, are gathering round the works, the teaching, the life of Jesus: these are felt to furnish the first and the final evidence in behalf of the religion which Jesus established. Persons disposed to turn away from everything else, have felt that they cannot cast off Christ himself and his lovely character. In a course of twenty-eight lectures I have gone over the events of his

life, and his sayings and discourses, from his birth in Bethlehem to his last words on the cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," and "into thy hand I commend my spirit." I have not tried to speak for Jesus, but I have endeavored to let Jesus speak for himself. I have not sought to come between you and the light to obstruct any portion of it, but standing by I have pointed to it, that you may see how pleasant it is, and be led to walk and rejoice in it. It now only remains that I apply the whole subject to the position of those, who after having been years with us, are finally leaving us to go forth to their various professional studies and works.

Gentlemen of the graduating class, you have left behind a very pleasant remembrance of yourselves and your behaviour. I trust you will on the other hand retain and cherish a pleasant remembrance of this place and this College, of your instructors and your fellow students. We look forward with some anxiety, but with far greater hope to your future lives. We wish that success may attend you in your various callings; but in this house of God we pray for higher blessings, "For our brethren and companions' sakes, we will now say peace be within you." It has been said of a mother, that if ever she is tempted to show more love to one than to the others of her sons, it will be to that son who is in sickness, in pain, in difficulty—the mother's affection clings around him the closer the ruder the assaults made upon him. So it will be with your Alma Mater. She will rejoice to hear of you in health and with the blessings of earth showered upon you; but she will rejoice still more to hear of you pursuing the path of honor and integrity, and this whether it brings the world's favor or the world's frown. He is to be regarded as the great man, he I trust will ever be the favourite with us, who walking in the midst of temptation and defalcation and pollution, holds himself high above it and refuses to be contaminated by it. Jesus our exemplar was not a successful man in this world's esti-

mation; but he accomplished a work on our earth, in comparison of which no other is worthy of being named; and I believe that his mother, as she stood at the foot of the cross, loved him with a depth of affection which she never cherished before. We send you forth with good wishes for all; but if there is one of you who is seeking to rise above the meanness of the world, above the age, it may be above himself, ever ready to sacrifice his own interest to the good of others, and who aims at nothing less than making his fellow men wiser and better, that son of ours will be followed by us in his career with intense interest, and when he returns to us he will ever be welcome to us, as the son is to the bosom of his mother.

To go over the points of the text and apply them.

1. *As to the way before you.* Here you have received sound instruction by painstaking teachers, in valuable branches of learning, fitted to prepare you for the work before you. I believe that in your future lives, as you discover the benefit you are deriving from it, you will value that instruction more than you do to-day. Here you have acquired habits of application, which will turn out to be of more advantage to you, than all the knowledge or accomplishments you have gained. In your future lives, in whatever position you may be placed, you will find that by well trained and highly cultivated minds you can accomplish work, which cannot be done by others who have not been so educated.

But then you are travellers set out in a journey, which no doubt goes through this world, but terminates in another. It is of the utmost importance that you now set out on the right way. I have seen a stream issuing from a fountain on a mountain ridge, hesitating as it were for a time, on which side to flow; and by a little trouble you could have made it take *this* direction, where it would have emptied itself into the sea at one side of the country, or take *that* direction where it would run into the ocean at the very opposite shores of a continent. Of a like nature are the criti-

cal emergencies which rise in our history: if we take this way our lot for time or eternity is determined in one direction; if we turn this other way, it is henceforth in a totally different direction. You, my young friends, have reached such a point. Take the one road, and it may lead down to sin, to ruin, to hell: take the other, through Christ as the way standing before you and open to you, and it will conduct into the path of faith, of holiness, of honor, and integrity, towards God and heaven and glory.

2. *As to the truth.* "Man," says Aristotle, "is organized for truth." Knowledge, truth is the nutriment on which the intellectual part of our nature feeds, and it is strengthened by it. Here in this College you have had knowledge imparted to you, knowledge solid rather than showy, and you have learned much truth, that is of the reality of things, in the heavens and in the earth, in the world within and the world without us. Science has a place in this College, and will have a growing place, growing with the growth of science.

We do not wish in this institution to check the spirit of inquiry. All that we desire is to see it rightly directed. And what I ask for first of all, and mainly on your part, is a sincere wish and anxiety to discover the truth; to find, not what pleases, not what gratifies, not what allows us to continue undisturbed in sin, but truth pure and simple. Setting out in this spirit I have no fears of you. You may be in darkness and difficulties for a time, but sooner or later a light will arise to guide you, as the star did to the seekers of wisdom from the East, and it will conduct you to the very place where truth is to be found, not it may be in the form which you expected, but the very truth of God revealed to man, and before which you pour out the incense of a true heart, more precious than the gold, the frankincense and the myrrh, presented by the wise men of the East to the infant Redeemer.

Having reached a certain amount you will seek to hold by what you have attained, and beware of the spirit against which we are warned, "ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth." And with all deference to certain living men of genius, who hold that côrrect views of religious truth cannot be had, I maintain that clear views of truth are to be preferred to confused ones. I am not to disparage a warm heart; but a warm heart at the seat of life, is all the better of a clear head above it to instruct and guide it. Taking the sun as the type of all greatness, we find that he gives light along with the heat, and I believe our religion does the same.

Not that you will expect to rise to a full comprehension of all the truths, which have been so far revealed to us about God and redemption. "We know," *yes we know*, but we know in part only. We who dwell in a world "where day and night alternate," we who go everywhere accompanied by our own shadow—a shadow produced by our dark body, but produced because there is light—cannot expect to be absolutely delivered from the darkness. Man's faculties, exquisitely adapted to the sphere in which he moves, were never intended to enable him to comprehend all truth. The mind is in this respect like the eye. The eye is so constituted as to perceive the things within a certain range, but as objects are removed farther and farther from us, they become more indistinct, and at length are lost sight of altogether. It is the same with the human mind. It can understand certain subjects and to a certain distance, but as they reach away farther they look more and more confused, and at length they disappear from the view. And if the human spirit attempts to mount higher than its proper elevation it will find all its flights fruitless. The dove, to use an illustration of Kant's, may mount to a certain elevation in the heavens, but as she rises the air becomes lighter, and at length she finds that she can no longer float upon its bosom, and should she attempt to soar higher, her pinions flutter in emptiness

and she falters and falls. So it is with the spirit of man, it can wing its way a certain distance into the expanse above it, but there is a limit, which if it endeavors to pass, it will find all its conceptions void and its ratiocinations unconnected.

Placed as we are in the centre of boundless space, and in the middle of eternal ages, we can see only a few objects immediately around us, and all others fade in outline, as they are removed from us, by distance, till at length they be altogether beyond our vision. And this remark holds true not only of the more ignorant of those whose eye can penetrate the least distance, it is true also of the learned; it is perhaps true of all created beings, that there is a bounding sphere of darkness surrounding the space rendered clear by the torch of science. Nay it almost looks as if the wider the boundaries of science are pushed, and the greater the space illuminated by it, the greater in proportion the bounding sphere into which no rays penetrate, just as (to use a very old comparison) when we strike up a light in the midst of darkness, in proportion as the light becomes stronger, so does also that surface black and dark which is rendered visible.

Still God has given us light in the midst of darkness, let us open our eyes to it, let us walk in it, let us rejoice in it. As you do so you will find, as you follow that light, through what may be at first a dim passage, that you reach more light. In that light we shall clearly see light. The view which you at last reach, may be like that which we have had from a mountain top on a sunshiny and bracing day, not indeed an unlimited view, for this would leave us nothing more to discover and behold, but still a clear view between us and a distant horizon, which when we reach in our explorations in this world or the next, we hope to discover more without limit and without end, as we know more of God and of a boundless universe.

3. *As to the life.* I trust you have received some life and impulse in this College. There is a cry in the present day to have education altogether and exclusively scientific, and in science these persons include only physical science. Now by all means let us give science a place and a high place, but in science let us include the study of the human mind, that in knowing other things we may know ourselves. But then the intellectual powers which are fed by scientific truth, are not the only faculties which God has given; besides the intellectual powers, God has given us motive and moral powers of no less importance. With the light we must also have warmth. We may discover a beauty even in the winter, with its clear nights and shining stars; but were it only for variety's sake we wish to have summer also, with its leaves and flowers as well as winter. And so along with science let us have history, and let us have literature, and let us give an ever growing place to these, by adding modern to ancient learning, to stimulate and ripen the mind by stirring narratives, by poetry and by eloquence.

But in seeking life, let us seek to have religious life. Without this, other life may only lead to misdirected energy, and is certain to end in exhaustion and disappointment; and we shall have to say even of scientific knowledge, though we should give our hearts to seek and search out by wisdom all things that are done in heaven and earth, and give ourselves to books and book making, that they are a weariness, and that they cannot after all satisfy the deeper wants of the soul. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, and if we have nothing else, we are made to feel that all is vanity and vexation of spirit; that after the bowl is quaffed the dregs are bitter; that when the flame has died down nothing but ashes remain; that the flower is blown away, while the thorn is left. "But where is wisdom to be found?" The restless sea says it is not in me. The air ever agitated says it is not in me. The moving sun, moon and stars say it is not in me. Every season

as it rolls on whether spring, or summer, or autumn, or winter says it is not in me. Every herb of the field, every beast of the field says I must die, it is not in me. Every fellow man says I am no better than yourself, it is not in me. Where then can that which the soul is seeking be found? It is found only in him who is the truth and the life to the soul. He who has taken Christ as his portion, can never properly speaking be disappointed. How distressing the condition of a man who has lived for a mere earthly purpose, and finds, after the toil of a lifetime, that this has failed, and with this the very end of his existence. What is left him but to say, they have taken away my gods and what have they left me. It is different with the Christian. He may fail of some particular end, but he cannot fail of his grand end; he may not be able owing to the storms which drive him back, to touch at particular points, but he reaches sooner or later his final haven. Such a faith with its motive and end, will give a consistency to his character and life amid every change of scene. The vessel on the ocean is an ever moving object out there among the agitated elements. The winds of heaven may be raging around it, the sea may be working tempestuous and threatening to overwhelm it, and the ship is not for one instant at rest. But meanwhile there is a unity and steadfastness in all its movements, for its course is towards a particular haven, and it is taking advantage of the very troubled elements to hasten its destination. A similar unity and consistency of action are imparted to the soul, setting out on the troubled sea of life, when it is enabled to aim at nothing else than the promotion of the glory of God and obedience to his will. This high motive power will raise the youth above the ordinary trials and temptations of life. Temptation will no longer be felt to be temptation by those who are engaged in the struggle. It is recorded of a Roman army, that when earnestly engaged in battle with the enemies of their country, the soldiers were unconscious of an earthquake which made the ground to tremble beneath their

feet. It is thus the Christian feels when earnestly contending for the honor of his Redeemer. He is removed above the influence of the ordinary temptations of life; and in answer to every proposal to draw him down from his elevation, he says with Nehemiah, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down to thee."